



YET WEBGUIDE

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Tony Land with Helen Holmes (Travel Counsellors) and Peter Drake – Revised 2019

Note: advice is constantly changing so you must check these suggestions for yourselves.

In general security (of money & bookings) is more important than making small savings.

You should seriously consider using a big independent travel agent such as those listed at the end, as they know all about the many options available (but not one linked to its own products such as Thomas Cook).

SAVING MONEY

1. Usually it is best to do the research and make the arrangements sooner rather than later. There is no substitute for web research. Airlines release their flights 11 months before departure, and travel agents may know of them earlier, but there's no hard and fast rule concerning whether it is best to book early or late. It is generally best to talk to big agents who can negotiate deals for large groups.
2. Fly midweek and/or at other less busy times. Red-eye flights tend to be cheaper.
3. Fly to a different airport (or even a nearby country) then continue by road.
4. Try a national carrier based in the EU but not in the UK (e.g. Air France, Lufthansa, Iberia): but note that with airlines not based in the EU there will be less protection.
5. Make full use of credit cards as these offer the best protection.
6. Check the extra charges: taxes, surcharges, other fees – as well as visa and entry and departure taxes.
7. Vehicle hire – Web search engines (e.g. holiday autos) are generally better than going directly to the hirer – but always check directly with the hirer before confirming. Check what is NOT included (e.g. insurance waiver protection).
8. Contact organisations like STA and Diversity Travel. The former very much deals with young person travel, and the latter specifically works with charities and the voluntary, not-for-profit sector. They can usually arrange for additional baggage allowance.
9. Under 30's can benefit from International Youth Travel cards (available through STA). There is a small cost but these saved £150 each on a recent trip to Cambodia & Viet Nam.

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PASSPORTS, VISAS, and PHOTOGRAPHS:

1. Check that the names on the passports are EXACTLY the same as on the tickets (e.g. the surname may be different with divorced parents, and the member may use his second name while the first is on the passport). Also if under 18's are travelling with parents with different names from their children a letter confirming that this is OK may be needed: this could include children travelling with grandparents for example www.uk.gov.uk – foreign-travel-advice should help. A form for using for this can be found at www.uk.gov-passportsandtravel-travel abroad travel with children In Addition South Africa has extra and very detailed requirements and these too are given on the South Africa pages of the website. For expeditions of young people the usual form of parental consent should be enough except perhaps in the case of South Africa (see above)
2. Also check that passports are well within the expiry date and that there are several spare pages. Most countries require at least 6 months validity upon entry.
3. Seek advice on these matters, including possible BREXIT complications, from www.uk.gov.uk – foreign-travel-advice
4. Consider collecting all the passports a week or more beforehand – younger participants are liable to forget to take them.
5. Make sure you understand the Visa requirements of the country(ies) you're going into and that if there's a requirement to obtain a visa before departure, then ensure these are applied for in good time. Consider whether they need individual applications or all the group's passports together. Do you need an invitation, an address or confirmation of onward travel? Do you understand the ramifications of crossing borders, especially at land crossings? Or politically?
6. Make sure that participants carry a photocopy of their passport and relevant visas away from their original passport. Leaders should also carry similar copies of ALL participants passports & visas.
7. All participants should carry additional passport-sized glossy photographs e.g. for in-Country permits.

PROTECTION IN CASE THE AIRLINE OR TRAVEL AGENT FAILS

1. Travel by sea!
2. Use a 'safe' airline unlikely to go bust (e.g. national carriers or big ones like Virgin).
3. Insure against failure [some airlines cover this but most don't]. A bolt-on to your main insurance may not be too expensive. Make sure that insurance is in place **before you pay** for the tickets.
4. Pay with credit cards which give cover under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act. You can check/update this information with the Consumer Direct Service (08454 040506).

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5. Book a package to include several items such as flights and accommodation and vehicle hire. Such packages offer protection but the details are complicated and a good travel agent should be consulted.
6. If you book a package (e.g. including vehicle hire and accommodation) use the same company for all elements.
7. Use a bonded operator, especially one covered by ATOL (ABTA is usually OK too but relates to travel agents not airlines).

OTHER ADVICE

1. Buy through (starting point to end point) tickets (do not even have two linked with the same airline; the airline's responsibility ends with the flight and if it is delayed and you miss the next (connecting) one you will probably have to buy a new ticket, your return flight tickets may also be invalid - and there will be no refunds (and you probably can't insure against this).
2. Using "no-frills airlines" may cause problems for group bookings on some flights if they insist that only individuals can book and they may even charge more for large numbers! Also they will probably be less generous about excess baggage for expeditions as well as making extra charges for almost everything.
3. If you expect to use mobile phones to communicate between groups get local SIM CARDS to avoid messages going to the UK then back. In the USA (and possibly other places) it may be cheaper to buy new phones with pre-paid cards. Try <https://sim4travel.eu> for pre-paid cards. Also, most networks have cheaper overseas packages, though not for all countries.
4. You probably pay to send texts from abroad but not to receive them so telling people to text you and then reply on a land line is a possibility; and you might be able to use Skype.
5. When paying with plastic abroad ask to pay in the local currency rather than sterling: your card company will give a better rate.
6. Remember to inform your card companies that you will be abroad (though many do not bother now).
7. When buying foreign currency think of paying cash: even debit cards may levy a charge (not all – Nationwide, First Direct, Halifax & HSBC may not - but check first). There are currently no charges for spending abroad on Post Office Platinum or Halifax Classic MasterCards and others – but they will charge for withdrawing from ATMs – always a bad idea with any credit card.
8. Pre-paid cards have many uses and are certainly worth taking (see Chapter on Budgets) but sometimes cannot be used for particular items, such as fuel and nightclubs.

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REFERENCES

Weekend newspapers – and many daily papers have travel websites full of information.

Various websites have comprehensive information about our rights when flights are delayed - and many other situations.

Travel Which? Is very good and has an index.

TRAVEL AGENTS

Diversity Travel: www.diversitytravel.com

STA: www.statravel.co.uk

Trailfinders: www.trailfinders.com

Travel Counsellors: www.travelcounsellors.co.uk

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